

Dark Hearts by orphan_account

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Summary:

The Bamboo Plague has killed almost everyone. Hawkins was no exception. This is the story of Eleven Hopper trying to survive. It's also the story of Mike Wheeler trying to survive, and to protect and teach his little sister Holly.

1. Bamboo and Recon

Author's Note:

We all know Eleven is a survivor, willing to kill in self defense. She has to a few times in the story. It's nasty. Fair warning.

Mike is also a survivor, for very different reasons.

They are written this way for a reason. The title is a clue. Mike and Eleven are much edgier than anything I've written so far.

I'm pretty heavily into post-apocalyptic stories. For the most part I've kept that separate from my Mileven stories. This is one I want to tell.

If you don't like graphic depictions of violence. Stop reading NOW.

Will they redeem themselves? If you want... please read on! :)

It went by a lot of different names when it first got noticed in 1972. *The Slow Plague* because it didn't seem to be spreading very fast. *The Bad Cold* because it seemed to start with a sniffle, but by the time the person who had it knew it *wasn't* a bad cold, it was way too late.

Eventually they called it the *Bamboo Plague* or just *Bamboo*. It was a variant of *Necrotizing fasciitis*. It consumed the entire body between twenty-four hours and a week, the person themselves was dead within a twelve hour period. Fillings, jewelry and synthetic clothes would be the only thing left behind.

Her dad taught her how to fight and survive. He was very good at it. He told her once that even at twelve, a girl her size could take down someone at six foot two. Nobody was more surprised than Eleven. Her dad hugged her tight the first time she did that. But he continued. He trained for as long as he could.

Most of the population was gone by the time Eleven and her dad got it in the winter of 1973, she was thirteen. Her sniffles stopped after a few hours.

Her dad did not... he left the cabin one night so she wouldn't see what happened to him.

She was alone and on her own. She cried herself to sleep a few times.

Cried hard.

In the long run she knew her dad loved her enough that he didn't want that to be her last memory of him.

Instead, her last memory was a hug, and a kiss on the head. She was sad... sure, but she smiled at the memory every time she thought of it.

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I looked at my body in the full length mirror. My breasts were too big. Not for me, and I'm sure not for my soulmate. But for me, for the moves I needed to make... they were.

I was in good shape. Nice curves. Wasted, I knew. I was probably the last girl in Hawkins, maybe the world. I didn't know.

She turned to look at her bum in the mirror. She licked a finger, touched a cheek and made a sizzling sound. "Ooh... I'm so sexy I want to kiss myself."

Some guy... any guy would be interested enough...

Even him.

I hated recon missions, as my dad called them. I had to tape down my breasts with gaffer tape. My dad's face turned so red when he told me about it, but he said, I would thank him one day.

I do dad. I so do.

He told me about Lycra body suits. I travelled to Chicago once after it all went to shit, and bought. Ha, ok not buy exactly. Ok I took every single colour and size of Lycra body suit I could find. They were calling it Spandex, and selling it to sports enthusiasts.

Whatever.

Wearing it let me move freely and be camouflaged depending on the colour I wore.

I also took every single size of girls underwear and bras.

Thanks Dad. I love what you did for me. I love you.

I would not be alive, save, and more importantly, smart if it wasn't for my dad.

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Eleven heard a dog bark.

It's him. He's there again. I wonder if he noticed anything different in the stores.

Eleven I was hidden in a copse that was just behind a grass ridge. Her side of the grass ridge had a sharp decline down to the trees. It had with plenty of foot holds, the other side was long and sloping down to the mall parking lot.

She pulled up her binoculars and put them to her eyes.

At first she wasn't quite sure what she was seeing. It looked like a child, lying down on the parking lot, and a border collie barking running back and forth from her to an SUV... *ok this was new.*

A guy wearing a muscle shirt and carrying an odd shaped rifle ran to the girl.

Eleven zoomed in.

The little blonde haired girl sat up and the guy gathered her in his arms. He was crying and hugging her, rocking her back and forth. Her arms were around his neck. The dog's tail was wagging. Things were good down there. When the girl stood back, Eleven could see that the girl was ok, the guy wasn't mad at her at all. It couldn't have been his daughter although he looked about Eleven's age, the girl looked about six, and if he was sixteen, it pretty much had to be his sister. Big age gap there, so maybe there was middle sibling that... was gone.

She saw the love he had in his eyes... for the girl... *has to be his sister*

She watched to see what they were doing. The dog hung close to the little girl.

Eleven paid more attention to the guy. He was well muscled. Tingly so. He wore a knife in each boot, one on each side of his thighs in sheaths that were tied down so they didn't flop when he ran. . He had some kind of harness on his back that he swung the weird looking rifle into. It looked like a move he'd done thousands of times. That meant he was probably good with the weapon.

Shit. He's going to be a problem. I wonder if I should kill him right now? I'd have to kill her too.

Eleven felt a tear run down her cheek. *Don't go there Eleven. When*

you make the choice to kill some six year old girl, with probably a brother who's keeping her alive and loves her. You'd be killing him to. His heart anyway. You'd have to kill him because he would hunt you down.

Is this how bad it's gotten? Trying to decide whether or not to kill a little girl?

Shit. My dad trained me and taught me how to survive... he also taught me how to love. Only to kill in self-defence.

This isn't self-defence. It's a conscious act... to make the decision to kill someone. Physically I know I can do it.

Emotionally? No. Those are two people who love each other down there. One of them is keeping the other alive and safe.

She decided not to approach them. She hoped the little girl was ok, but her own safety came first.

It was a tough decision, and she knew which side her dad would fall on... but she likes to think she still had a heart that wasn't forged in cold steel.

She would find out where they lived later. For now she was going to take her supplies and head home.

She did her regular run to the cabin, almost in record time.

She was getting better.

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Eleven spent a lot of time making sure she couldn't be found. She tore up the entire area where her dad's Blazer used to park. She planted new trees, Eastern Redceder all round the cabin at around the hundred yard mark. They would grow easily, provide food and

shelter for wild life, but also help hide the cabin and provide a wind break. She did it in concentric circles. In ten years they would start doing their job for her. She was surprised that her dad had already done a lot of that.

All to keep her safe.

She insulated the cabin, and then travelled around all over the county and neighboring counties to find old barns with grey, rotting wood. She collected all she could find, and built an outer skin construction on the cabin. Anyone looking at would see an abandoned dilapidated cabin. Windows were long removed. She literally built a cabin within a cabin. She made it look like there was no roof on the cabin. Nobody would even give it a second look. They wouldn't even go in for shelter.

She had a fireplace and plenty of wood stacked out in the back. She couldn't risk the smoke, so in the winter time, her bedroom was a mass of blankets. Very heavy insulation on that part of the cabin. She could spend hours reading by candle light.

She'd been working on the cabin for years, she was in very good shape. After seeing that guy in the mall parking lot. She pushed herself to finish.

She had a good idea of the regular route he took for supplies. She avoided those areas.

I need to gear up for winter. Going to be a bad one this year.

She tucked him into the back of her mind while she prepared.

"Someday we will meet." She said aloud. "But it will be on my terms."

Eleven was wrong.

2. Holly's Funny Feeling

Notes for the Chapter:

Sorry about turning off guest comments. When the asshole disappears, I'll probably turn them back on again.

Something is different here.

Mike couldn't quite put his finger on it. It made him uneasy and a lot more wary than he would have been any other trip to the mall. This store in the mall looked different. Felt different. He and Holly were shopping for clothes. He told her to be practical but she could pick out pretty things if she really wanted to.

Her eyes went wide with her smile and Mike felt his heart swell. She wasn't really sure about the whole money thing yet, or why they went 'shopping' all the time, but she was happy to be with her older brother who seemed to pay more attention to her than ever before.

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It was Saturday night and Mike was watching *Chiller Thriller* on tv. Every Saturday they showed two movies back to back. Mostly horror or science-fiction, most of it was schlocky, but there were always a

few gems that got played.

The first movie was “*No Blade of Grass*” about a virus that kills all forms of grass, including wheat, even rice. The breakdown of society, bikers, it all went to shit. Mike wasn’t particularly interested in this kind of movie. People being cruel for no reason other than their own, bothered Mike a lot.

The second movie was “*The Last Man on Earth*” with Vincent Price. He’d seen the remake with Charlton Heston at the Hawk, so he wanted to see the original.

He hadn’t seen his parents all day, he was allowed to stay home and not go bargain hunting, as his mom called it, because he thought he was coming down with a cold, he probably had gotten it from Holly.

He never saw them again.

It wasn’t till later on the next day where the first reports of a disease they were calling Bamboo now hit the news cycle. Mike remembered thinking “Maybe it will kill all the stupid people first.” But he knew that wasn’t the way of the world.

Gender, race, religious, and political beliefs... they meant nothing to a virus. It would kill with abandon. With no emotion or thought. It just *was*.

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Mike heard Harry’s frantic barking.

Holly!

He pulled his club from his back harness, it had taken him a long time to design it and he’d gone through various iterations before he’d made one that he could pull it out quick and not be encumbered with

it when he had it holstered.

He followed Harry's bark.

Mike's heart stopped when he saw Holly laying on the parking lot pavement. He ran to her.

When she saw him she smiled and said, "Shhh... I'm playing dead."

"You're ok?"

"I'm fine Mikey, I had a funny feeling, I think someone is watching us. So I'm playing dead. I must have been good at it because Harry is having a fit."

Mike was very careful not to be too obvious as was looking around. He pulled up Holly into a hug.

"Did I scare you Mikey? I'm sorry."

"Just a little, but that's what I told you to do. You were very good at it. Harry was convinced."

Holly smiled. The dog had found them at the mall one day, she was a border collie, and she took to Holly right away.

Holly's favourite book was called "Harry the Dirty Dog," and even though Mike told her the dog was a girl, Holly wanted to name her Harry.

Harry it was.

Harry and Holly. *It sounds like a comedy team from the Fifties.* Mike thought. He was sure it was a trained sheep herding dog. He'd looked up the basic commands, wrote them down in a notebook even. Holly was Harry's flock. She was very good, and young, she'd probably been bred to train as a sheep dog. Harry would be with them for years.

I can't see anyone. They are either very good, or they are gone... except now I feel like I'm being watched. Whoever it is, is going to regret it.

“Look back.” Mike said to Harry.

Harry looked at Holly, but seemed to understand what Mike wanted, and ran off towards the ridge.

Mike got into the SUV and waited.

Within minutes Harry had come back with something in his mouth. It turned out to be a pair of underwear. Not tighty whities. Women’s underwear.

Mike had to laugh to himself. *No way in hell am I going to test if these were already worn by sniffing them. They looked new though.* Then he saw the store tag on them. They were from the store he and Holly had just been in.

Shit. Is it a woman following me around? Could I kill her if I had to? If she threatened Holly I would... I would even tell her why.

Killing asshole bikers that were still alive is one thing. Killing a girl. Shit... ah... shit. Shit. Shit!

XXXXX

Mike had done two things he wasn’t happy about.

He talked to Holly since she was three years old as if she was an adult. It showed, because she talked back to him the same way. She still had the childlike innocence you get with being six years old, but her childhood had been robbed from her.

Bamboo had robbed it. The disease named from a fast growing species of grass had stolen her childhood, and his years of being a

reckless teenager.

Not that he would have been reckless, but all the other things. He never had the fun or joy, or even heartbreak of having a girlfriend.

Unlikely this woman who was watching them would be interested in a skinny... well he had a few muscles... still. She wasn't going to be into him.

The other thing he'd done... or neglected... was to teach Holly how to survive. He didn't know how. They were living off of what was available in Hawkins and surrounding towns.

Mike didn't know if he'd be able to live off the land, or farm, or anything. That worried him a lot. Eventually they would run out of food, and supplies here.

If it hadn't been for that beef jerky truck, he and Holly would probably have starved.

As far as Mike knew, he'd taken every single kitchen table knife that could be found in Hawkins. He spent his evenings sharpening each and every one. Sharp enough to shave with. He put a flame on it to blacken it, and then stuck it, handle down into the lawn, every few inches. Any body falling or tripping on them would get a surprise. A deadly one.

Of all people, Lucas' dad had given him a Case jackknife for his birthday and Mike had learned how to sharpen and hone it so it could slice onion skin paper. He kept it on him all the time.

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Mike heard an inhuman sound. It scared the shit out of him. *Shit!*
What makes that sound?

He looked out the basement window, then slowly opened the basement door.

That was when he heard it again. The sound was awful. It was coming from the corner of the lawn. He went down the driveway and saw a rabbit skewered on the kitchen knives.

“Rabbit Stew tonight.”

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“This is good! What is it?” Holly asked.

“Thumper stew.”

“Thumper?”

“You remember Bambi’s friend?”

“Well, you told me we already ate Bambi, so we might as well start eating his friends.”

Mike threw his head back and laughed. “Ok, you got me there. Just remember that there is no nutrients in rabbit, so you will slowly starve to death if that’s all you eat.”

“I know Mikey... I remember. Will you read me a story tonight?”

“Sure. Do I need to guess which one?”

“No guesses needed. Harry The Dirty Dog. I think he might have saved our lives today.”

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Mike read her the story.

At night once he was in bed, he thought of how Bamboo had robbed his little sister of her childhood.

It wasn't the first time, but it was time once again.

He cried himself to sleep.

3. Fun and Not So Fun

Notes for the Chapter:

This is the chapter with the graphic violence. Fair warning.

Shit. I didn't want to do it.

But I was horny. And he was very hot. I couldn't wait to get into my pajamas and get into bed.

When I touched myself I just pretended he was taking me repeatedly. I was exhausted before I finally fell asleep

I slept easy all night.

XXXXX

Pleasuring myself and thinking about him... as much fun as it was... it felt... wrong. This was someone I might have to kill. I had my share of rubber toys and I used them when I needed to, but having him to actually fantasize about... well, all I can say is that it worked great.

It was overcast the next day. I wanted to run back to the ridge overlooking the mall parking lot. I taped down my breasts, thank you Mr. Gaffer! I wore a darker green lycra body suit. I was getting faster running through

the woods. When I got the ridge I still had my wind, and I could run back as fast just as easily. I ran everywhere. The only time I walked was when I was outside enjoying the rain.

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He was very rough with me.

"I love you Jane."

He finished... I didn't.

"My name is Eleven... Did you really mean that?"

"Mean what?"

"That you loved me?"

"Shit. You're not gonna get all hormonal on me are you? I say that to all the girls I fuck they like it. Makes them come harder or something... Eleven? That's a stupid name. Your name is Jane."

"You mean you don't love me?"

"For fuck's sake. We were fucking. Nothing more. It's not like we are going to get married or anything. Fuck. What's wrong with you?"

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Well, surprise, I started to cry... and then I woke up. Even more surprising was that I was still crying. He said he didn't love me!

It was a dream Eleven. That's what guys say when they want to have sex or even during it.

I have to kill him. He's just going to want to fuck me and then be done. All guys are the same, why would I expect him to be any different?

You are going to kill him because he was a bad sex partner... in a dream? That's cold Eleven. Even for you.

Fuck.

XXXXX

What's that sound?

Eleven turned over and brought the binoculars to her eyes. Motorcycles!

They were surrounding him. Not the motorcycles but their riders.

And one of them, a bigger guy, was holding on to the shoulders of the little girl.

Shit. This is going to be bad.

What do I do? I could let them kill him and the little girl... at least I wouldn't be killing them. Then I could kill the bikers when they were done.

When they were done?

Eleven are you even listening to yourself? Instead why don't you help him?

She didn't get any more time to think about it.

Eleven would be hard pressed to give an accurate account of what she saw. The muscled guy moved *fast* . This was not the first time he'd used his weapon.

He was facing two of the bikers. He pulled out his weird rifle thing by the barrel. What was really weird is that he held it like a canoe paddle.

He swung it into an uppercut on the left biker facing him. Eleven blinked. It looked like it hooked under his jaw and tore it off... in a horizontal paddling motion, he swung it back to his right and caught the other biker in the side of his head. His head imploded or something, it was definitely not in the same shape as when the whole thing started.

He turned around to the biker that was holding the little blonde girl.

Something happened that Eleven wasn't expecting. The little girl seemed to drop do her knees, and suddenly she was holding a knife, which was immediately pushed into the crotch of the biker who was holding her shoulders.

It went into the guard on the knife. Right to the hilt. Had to be nine inches into his groin.

Her brother, as far as Eleven knew, turned around and *threw* the rifle thing at the guy.

Eleven watched the rifle stock stop at the biker's forehead. The biker dropped to his knees. He went over and pulled knife out of his crotch, and wiggled the rifle stock out of the biker's forehead. Looked like it cut a three inch cash into him.

Just then another biker came out of the store. He looked around, and then laughed. He was talking to the muscled guy... almost like he knew him. He held up his hands and was probably saying that he didn't want any part of it.

Another very fast paddle motion. And the the bike was on the ground. The muscled guy stood over him, and swung the butt of the rifle stock into the bikes head.

And again.

And again.

And again.

And again.

And again.

The head was pulped. It wasn't recognizable as a head anymore.

Eleven pulled the binoculars away from her eyes quickly, turned her head to the side and threw up... she kept throwing up until she was dry heaving. She'd never seen that much carnage before.

He's dangerous. That wasn't just self-defense.

When she put the binoculars back to her eyes, he was walking to the other bikers and double-tapping them.

He's making sure they are dead.

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Holly had done exactly what Mike had trained her to do. She did just enough fake crying to throw the biker off, and then he was done. He'd given her a nine inch tanto blade that would have pierced a skull, so going through crotch of the jeans the guy was wearing wasn't a problem.

She scrambled towards the SUV and Mike threw his club.

He pulled out the knife and his club and cleaned them off on the biker's clothes.

He heard the entrance doors to the mall open and saw another biker come out.

The biker looked around at the bloody mess and laughed. So much for comradery. He held up his hands, and said, "Stupid fuckers. Hey buddy, I have no quarrel with you."

Except... Mike had a quarrel with him. It was Troy Wash, he wasn't short anymore, so had probably passed for eighteen or nineteen.

"Hey Troy. Karma time."

He was down after the first blow to the head. Mike's frustration at the bullying he'd suffered at the hands. He seemed to enter a state of pure rage.

By the time he had stopped swinging, Troy didn't really have anything that could be recognized as a head anymore.

"I should piss on you where you died, asshole." He spit on him instead.

XXXXX

Eleven didn't feel like running home. She thought it would upset her stomach even more than it was already.

She was sure it would be a long time before she touched herself again. She definitely knew who her fantasy would *not* be. Maybe Sean Connery or Robert Redford... no... definitely Sean Connery.

Wow, Eleven! You just saw four people being killed in a not so fun way, and you are thinking of your next orgasm? I think that might be even colder.

You need to get your shit together girl.

“Damn, him!”

4. The Meeting

Before the world went to shit her dad had taken her to Algonquin Park in Ontario, Canada and then even farther north in Ivujivik in the winter. For winter training.

She *hated* sleeping in the cold. She had to sleep while cold for longer than she than she liked to remember.

He got her a pair of Sherpa company snowshoes. They were easy to repair, and not so hard on the shins if you fell forward.

She laughed when her dad told her it wasn't that bad, on ordinary snowshoes. It hurt like hell, how could that not be bad? He said, "Pull up your pant leg, run your fingertip along your shin."

She did.

"Feel all those little bumps?"

"Yes."

"Those are all the times you've bumped your shin. Your body creates a calcium build up there. Everyone has them. I'm not saying it doesn't hurt, but your body *does* try to help you out."

"I want to be as smart as you are dad."

"You do?"

I nodded vigorously and enthusiastically.

So he taught me. Everything he knew... and now... everything I knew.

I love you dad.

I think I will never love anyone as much as I loved my Dad.

XXXXXX

Mike was at the mall again. This time another clothing store looked... wrong. He still couldn't put his finger on it and that was starting to bother him a lot.

Why does this store look different? It didn't before. I'm used to the other one looking different and I still don't know why... I'm just used to it. But why does this one now look... ok it's more like it feels different? None of the other stores do. I mean, I know the bikers would take stupid shit like TV's and stereo equipment... even though there hasn't been any electricity for at least three years. So those are gone, but I can explain those.

Mike laughed. He hadn't actually explained that, it was Holly had. He felt a little dumb at the obvious explanation that a six year old had to point out to him.

Just that thought made Mike angry. Her childhood had been taken away from her. Nobody should have that done to them. If he saw anybody else in his encounters, he would kill them on the spot.

Bikers already had already sealed there own death sentence.

Fuckers.

Mike decided to take a different route. He was talking and laughing with Holly when he saw something out of place from the corner of his eye.

He stopped the SUV. "Ok, you have two choices." He said to her.

"Get in the back on the floor with the black blanket over you... or take the wheel and get ready to drive like a madwomen without a license."

She grinned at him. "Madwoman."

"That's my girl."

He leaned forward and kissed her forehead. "Ok, If i'm walking back, everything is fine. If i'm running back get ready to stomp on the gas."

"I'm your getaway girl."

Mike hugged her. "I love you Holly."

"I love you too, Mike... will everything be ok?"

"I think so, you know me..."

"Not being stupid."

"That's right."

"Can I drive home anyway?"

Mike grinned. "Sure."

They took a few minutes to adjust the seat for her, when she gave him the nod. He said, "I'll be right back."

Mike took his club out. *Might as well look intimidating as soon as possible.*

He walked back to the intersection to cul-de-sac they passed, he saw the three figures standing a few feed part at the end of it.

There was no reaction from them.

They must have seen me.

Shit! Are they a decoy? Mike looked carefully around him. As he got closer he realized they were mannequins.

What?

And then it hit him. That's what was missing in the clothing stores. All the mannequins were gone.

He walked back to the SUV and to Holly's surprise he asked her to drive around to the streets they didn't usually go down.

He found mannequins two but usually three in every street. Some were on lawns, some at cars, most were on the street.

Ok. Someone else is in Hawkins. Those mannequins didn't walk here by themselves.

Mike had just gone from generally paranoid for survival purposes... to super paranoid because of the panties... too super fucking paranoid because of the mannequins.

He needed to do something about whoever it was.

XXXXX

It's time to find out where he lives.

Eleven wondered if the guy had noticed the missing mannequins at the various clothing stores. As far as she knew, she had taken all of them. They were practice dummies to her. When she saw them, she would sneak up on them and hurt them.

As if they were human.

She had made a point of *not* remembering where they were. She wanted to be surprised, paranoid... and deadly

The next morning was perfect. It was cool enough where the frost and light snow that had occurred the previous night would stick around for at least until noon. It was overcast so there would be no sun to melt anything.

Eleven's patience paid off. She was able to follow his SUV tracks to the mall. She had worn her white bodysuit and taken up her position

along the ridge.

And that's when things went to shit.

XXXXX

She rolled over and put the binoculars to her eyes after she heard the dog bark. It sounded like a frantic bark, but she didn't see any obvious problem.

The little girl was in the truck, and the dog was running around it.

She saw the muscled guy go into the front of the mall. She seen him do that dozens of times. She noticed the be motorcycles were gone, and animals must have dragged off the body's.

She was thinking of the grisly meal they must be enjoying when she heard the crunch of the snow behind her.

"Shit."

XXXXX

Shit. How do I talk myself into saying alive?

"Professor Mannequin I presume?"

"Then you must be Henry Morgan Stanley?"

"You've seen the movie?"

"And I know the story. Can I say this before we go to bed together?"
She saw the guy turn a deep shade of red. It was meant to disarm

him, put him off guard.

“*That* . Is the last time you sneak up on me. I’ll let you say one more thing before I kill you where you stand. Your body will be dead before you even hit the ground.”

He looked at her boots. He looked at her hips. Eleven half expected to look between her legs or at least at her chest. Instead, he looked at her hair.

He’s checking for weapons. He’s seen my boot knives, and the ones on my waist. He should have looked at my boobs but he didn’t. He didn’t. He looked at my pixie cut instead. He thinks I’m a dyke.

Eleven saw his shoulders visibly slump. She’d read the word in the dictionary. Capitulation. *He believes I can do it.*

With an honesty that almost brought her to tears he said, “You wouldn’t be just killing me. You’d be killing my little sister too. She’s good... but she needs me.”

“If you are that concerned about her, why did you leave in the truck back there?” Eleven made a small notion with her head to indicate what was over the ridge behind her.

“That’s a life size doll. For an six year old. She’s safe. At least as safe as I can make her from... bikers... you... I think you’d find her.”

She saw a tear roll down his cheek. She saw him mouth move, but he spoke with his heart.

“Please don’t kill her.”

Ok. I officially feel like shit now. He loves her. He loves her more than his own life.

“I’m not going to kill you... or your sister. But I don’t want to be killed either. Tell me what street or at least the area to avoid so I don’t stumble on you two.”

“Let me just invite you to dinner. Rabbit stew, with real rabbit, mushrooms, garlic, other veggies.”

I hope I'm not drooling in front of him.

"No strings attached?"

"Uh... what do you mean?"

"Do you want me to sleep with you tonight?"

He's really red, he wasn't expecting that. But... he looked at my hair again.

"Uh, no, of course not... I... I just want to be safe... with my little sister."

"Ok... how do I repay this meal?"

He looked at me like I'd gone off my rocker. He said it again...

"Please don't kill Holly."

Ok... I started crying. He actually came over, hugged me and said, "Thank you."

I cried even harder. All the over the top violence I'd seen was because he was protecting her.

To have a guy loves you that much. For me... it was only in the movies.

To have that in real life?

What would it be like to have that? A nice guy capable of that kind of love?

Would the steel shield of my heart even let that happen?

I hoped so.

And I hoped it would happen with this guy.

5. The Dinner

Notes for the Chapter:

Sigh. Another weak ending. I didn't have any more story.

I do have another "Bamboo" (no Kung-Fu... sorry) story in the works. It's meant to be "lighter"

"I'm going to take a wild guess and say you want the back seat. In case I grope you or something and you have to kill me."

"Do I really come across as that hardass?"

"Kind of... yeah."

"I'll take the back seat. Harder for you to grope me."

"Point taken. Soooo. If I was to grope you... what name should I whisper in your ear."

"Eleven."

XXXXX

"My name is Mike."

“Why didn’t you shoot those bikers?”

“With what?”

“Your black rifle thing.”

“Oh, that. It’s not a rifle. It’s on the seat beside you, take it out of the harness, take a look at it.”

“You aren’t worried that I’ll shoot you in the back?”

“Definitely not... but you can point it at me and say *pew pew* a few times if you want.”

Eleven pulled it out. She didn’t really know what she was looking at.

“Quite an enigma isn’t it?”

“Wrapped in a puzzle. Yes.”

“Churchill. You are a history fan.”

“I am as well educated as a girl can be nowadays. Ok, I’m stumped, tell me what it is.”

“American Indians used it. It’s a gunstock war club. The spear point is 1055 steel, but as you’ve already seen, the gunstock is tough enough.”

“This doesn’t look like wood.”

“It’s polypropylene. I have ironwood versions of it. Very tough.”

“And deadly.”

“I don’t go anywhere without it. I can teach you how to use one if you want.”

“Rabbit stew first.”

Mike laughed.

XXXXX

Eleven closed her eyes at the taste of the stew.

“Good?” Mike smiled at her.

“You could have given me skunk stew and I would have been ok with it.”

“Thankfully, it’s rabbit. Filling but not nutritious except for the other ingredients”

“You are a good cook.”

“Holly made it.”

Eleven looked at the blonde six year old. “ *You* did?!”

“I’m a good cook.” She pouted a little, and then she said nonchalantly, “Are you staying the night?”

Eleven put down her spoon.

“Did you really think I was staying the night... Oh wait... you thought I might sleep with you?!” Her voice was indignant, “Ok, I’m outta here.”

She got up and walked out the front door.

She left her bowl of rabbit stew, still steaming.

XXXXX

“You run fast.” Holly said, puffing.

“You do too, how did you catch me.” Eleven asked.

“Took obvious shortcuts.”

“You are a smart little girl... why do you talk so well?”

“Mikey doesn’t babytalk to me. That makes a difference. Too late for parents to know that now, but it works if you don’t want,” and then Holly started to make cute babytalk, “my little punkin, wants a poopie? Yes you do, yes you do. Make your poopie right in your pants, I’ll clean it up...”

Eleven laughed, “Ok, didn’t see that coming. I get your point.”

“Ok, my *point*, for asking was not so my big brother can finally have sex... *whatever* that is, it was so we could make sure you had clothes, and a place to sleep that nobody had died on.”

Ouch. She doesn't pull any punches. There's going to be a storm tonight. Company wouldn't be the worst thing... and I'm still hungry.

XXXXXX

“Where’s Mike?”

“Probably in the basement. I’ll heat up your stew for you.”

“Who made the bread?” Eleven’s voice was much more... thankful...

“Mikey, and I. We have a rick oven in the backyard.”

Eleven used the bread to sop up every drop of the stew broth. She was full and content. It was better than what she’d eaten herself in a longtime.

I better apologize to him.

XXXXX

“Your little sister is something else.”

“Isn’t she though?”

“I’m sorry.”

“Holly said it, apologize to her.”

“I sort of did, that’s why I’m back. I tucked her in.”

“She fell asleep right away didn’t she? The sound of storms do that for her. You kiss her goodnight? I always do that. Stew good?”

Eleven smiled. “I did and it was. And so was the bread. Thank you. I’m glad I didn’t kill you two.”

Mike threw his head back and laughed. “You know, I’m just taking your word for it that you could.”

“Someday when you have eaten enough Wheaties, we’ll go biker hunting. I’ll show you.”

“You have weird ideas for dates, Eleven but ok, I accept...” Mike frowned. “Is it ok if I call you, um, *El*? Short for Eleven? You can explain that name to me sometime too. You call me Mike, you know, short for Mikey.”

Eleven giggled. “So... bed?”

Oh, did he ever turn red. He took it the wrong way... should I... go with it?”

“Um, yeah, um, well, you don’t want Nancy’s old room, you can have

mine. I usually sleep down here anyway. One condition... I'll agree to it too."

Here it comes. No sex. El thought. "Ok... do I have to guess?"

"Let's not kill each other in our sleep?"

"Oh! So sex is ok then?" El clamped her hand over her mouth. "I guess I said that out loud."

If his face goes any more purple I'm going to have to give him mouth-to-mouth anyway.

Mike took longer to think about it than he thought it would take. "No. Am I refusing no strings attached sex from a beautiful girl? Looks like it."

"No strings attached? There were strings mister. I would have been breaking one of my rules anyway."

"No sex on the first date? Weird how girls have that one."

"Weird how boys don't."

"How about we compromise?"

"How do you compromise on no sex?" A crack of lightning made her cringe.

"I would not refuse sleeping beside you on a stormy night. I can see you don't like storms."

El started to unzip her bodysuit.

"What are you doing?" Mike asked, only slightly alarmed.

"I'm not sleeping in this. Holly said you might have something for me to wear?"

"Um, track pants and t-shirts in the laundry room."

XXXXXX

“I your no sex rule didn’t last very long.” Mike said.

El sighed. “There are two conditions. It’s not a one time thing... and you let me help you raise Holly. She’s not that far off from needing to know girl things.”

“I still have one condition.”

“Oh?”

“You don’t kill me in my sleep.”